

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0906

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

UNCLAS BRASILIA 2649

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PGOV, BR

SUBJECT: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S CLOSING CONGRESS

REF: BRASILIA 2587

1. SUMMARY: MDB EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ISSUED STATEMENT APRIL 2 CONDEMNING PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO RECESS CONGRESS, BLAMED HIM FOR COVERING UP GOVERNMENT'S INCOMPETENCE, AND PROMISED TO CONTINUE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL. ARENA REBUTAL SAME DAY SAID DISSOLUTION WAS CAUSED BY MDB "LACK OF UNDERSTANDING, INTRANSIGENCE AND RADICALISM". PRESIDENT OF SENATE TOLD PRESS CONGRESS WOULD PROBABLY REOPEN APRIL 11. REACTION BY POLITICIANS IS GENERALLY SPLIT ALONG PARTY LINES. END SUMMARY.

2. MDB NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MET APRIL 2 MORNING AFTER PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED CONGRESSIONAL RECESS (REFTEL) AND ISSUED CONDEMNATION OF GEISEL'S ACT. STATEMENT BLAMED GOVERNMENT FOR "UNJUSTIFIABLE REPETITION OF CRISES" IN ATTEMPT TO COVER UNCLASSIFIED

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UP ITS INCOMPETENCE AND CALLED CURRENT CRISIS MOST ARTIFICIAL OF ALL. MDB DEFENDED ITS STANCE ON JUDICIAL REFORM CLAIMED LONG LIST OF LEGAL AND JUDICIAL ORGANIZATIONS HAD SIMILARLY FOUND PROBLEMS WITH DRAFT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. PARTY SAID IT OFFERED "HUNDREDS" OF CHANGES AND A SUBSTITUTE BILL BUT MET WITH ARENA INTRANSIGENCE TO ANY CHANGES. CALLING RECESS A "GRAVE AND UNJUST SANCTION", MDB SAID PRESIDENT "ARROGATED

LEGISLATIVE COMPETENCE TO HIMSELF THAT THE NATION HAD NOT GIVEN HIM". STATEMENT NOTED MDB REPRESENTED 40 PERCENT OF THE CONGRESS AND GOVERNMENT NOW WANTED TO IGNORE THE VIEWS OF AN EXPRESSIVE PORTION OF PUBLIC OPINION. MDB ALSO CLAIMED ARENA WAS ACTING BECAUSE MDB HAD GROWN AS A POLITICAL FORCE IN THE COUNTRY. IN CONCLUSION MDB SAID IT WOULD CONTINUE ITS FIGHT "WITHOUT PROVOCATION" FOR DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL AND ASKED THOSE "WHO WANT TO FIGHT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FUTURE" TO JOIN IN.

3. ARENA, IN ACERBIC RESPONSE LATER SAME DAY, BRANDED MDB STATEMENT AS "FALSEHOODS AND HALF TRUTHS," AND SAID IT TYPIFIED PARTY'S RADICAL AND HYSTERICAL APPROACH. STATEMENT CLAIMED MDB'S "HUNDREDS OF AMENDMENTS" TO JUDICIAL REFORM BILL WERE AIMED AT ISOLATED CASES AND NOT FOR OVERALL BENEFIT OF ACT. ARENA FURTHER CLAIMED THAT DIALOGUE HAD BEEN IMPOSSIBLE WITH FRAGMENTED PARTY AND THAT MDB'S INTRANSIGENCE HAD PARALYZED CONGRESS. STATEMENT CONCLUDED THAT RECESS WAS "NEITHER DESIRED NOR PRE-PLANNED" BY ARENA AND HAD BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY "LACK OF UNDERSTANDING, INTRANSIGENCE AND RADICALISM" OF OPPOSITION.

4. ARENA PRESIDENT OF SENATE PETRONIO PORTELLA TOLD PRESS APRIL 2 THAT CONGRESS WOULD REMAIN CLOSED THROUGH APRIL 11 UNLESS SOMETHING ELSE OCCURRED TO PROLONG RECESS THROUGH OTHER PRESS REPORTS CONTINUE TO CLAIM RECESS MAY BE 30 DAYS OR LONGER.

5. PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY CAMARGO DENIED APRIL 2 THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO TAKE SEVERE ACTION AGAINST RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS WHICH DEVIATED FROM PLANALTO CENSORSHIP INSTRUCTIONS TO USE ONLY OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE IN REPORTING ON JUDICIAL REFORM CONTROVERSEY. IN RELATED EVENT, JORNAL DO BRASIL REPORTED THAT TELEVISION INDUSTRY HAD CALCULATED THAT IN GREATER RIO AREA 4.25 OUT OF 8 MILLION WATCHED PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS ON TELEVISION DURING PRIME TIME APRIL 1, WHICH INDICATES GEISEL SPEECH PROBABLY REACHED BROAD AUDIENCE ELECTRONICALLY NATIONWIDE.

6. REACTION BY POLITICIANS TO RECESS HAS BEEN LARGELY ALONG PARTY LINES. CHAMBER PRESIDENT MARCO MACIEL (ARENA) SAID THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE WAS "CLEAR, FRANK AND OBJECTIVE AND WE HOPE THE MEASURES THAT HE HAS COME TO ADOPT WILL MAKE POSSIBLE THE EXECUTION OF HIS POLITICAL PROJECT IN A FORM TO ASSURE THE NORMALITY OF INSTITUTIONS." ARENA SENATE LEADER REZENDE RESPONDED TO MDB'S STATEMENT BY CALLING IT A FLIGHT FROM RESPONSIBILITY AND A COVER-UP OF THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT OCCURRED OVER THE REFORM OF THE JUDICIARY. REZENDE SAID "I AM NOT ABLE TO SAY

THAT THE DIALOGUE IN CONGRESS HAS DISAPPEARED." MDB WOULD HAVE TO HAVE "SENSIBILITY FOR THIS DIALOGUE, ALTERING ITS METHODS AND SUBMITTING TO THE WISH OF THE MAJORITY OF THE NATION, REPRESENTED BY ARENA". PRESIDENT OF ARENA FRANCELINO PEREIRA INDICATED APRIL 3 THAT HIS PARTY WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN DEBATES ABOUT REFORMS DECREED DURING THE RECESS. SECRETARY GENERAL OF ARENA NELSON MARCHEZAN SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE PRESIDENT WOULD RESORT TO CASSATIONS, ALTHOUGH HE DEFENDED USE OF CASSATIONS AS A LEGITIMATE REVOLUTIONARY MEANS.

7. SEVERAL STATEMENTS OF KEY MDB FIGURES REFLECTED PESSIMISM ABOUT THE PARTY'S FUTURE. MDB VICE LEADER IN CHAMBER FREITAS NOBRE, WHO LED FIGHT AGAINST JUDICIAL REFORM IN ABSENCE OF MINORITY LEADER FURTADO, SAID THAT "IF THE GOVERNMENT CASSATES DEPUTIES OR SENATORS BECAUSE THEY VOTED AGAINST THE PROJECTED LAW, IT WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY IN JUSTIFYING ITS ACT." FREITAS NOBRE WAS SPEAKING WITH CONTEXT OF POSSIBLE IMPACT OF UNCLASSIFIED

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CONGRESSIONAL RECESS UPON FRG-GOB NUCLEAR AGREEMENT. FREITAS NOBRE ADMITTED THAT ELEMENTS IN THE MDB WERE CONSIDERING DISSOLVING THE PARTY, BUT DID NOT BELIEVE THE PARTY WOULD IMMEDIATELY STUDY THAT POSSIBILITY. IF ANYTHING, HE ADDED, PARTY WAS MORE UNIFIED AS A RESULT OF THE PRESIDENT'S ACT. MDB DEPUTY FATHER JOSE NOBRE ALSO WARNED THAT GOVERNMENT REFORMS FURTHER "STACKING THE DECK" AGAINST THE MDB IN ELECTIONS COULD MEAN THE END OF THE PARTY, SINCE PARTIES EXIST TO COMPETE FOR POWER. BUT HE URGED MDB TO CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE AND REJECT SELF-DISSOLUTION. IN A SIMILARLY PESSIMISTIC VEIN, MDB SENATOR ORESTES QUERCIA SAID THE "FUTURE OF THE MDB IS IN THE HAND OF THE LORD." NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE MDB ULYSSES GUIMARAES SAID LEGITIMACY OF ANY ACT DECREED BY THE PRESIDENT AND NOT APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS, WOULD BE QUESTIONED. HE ADDED THAT MDB'S FIGHT WOULD CONTINUE AND NOTED THAT SUBSTANTIAL BODY OF THE LEGAL/JURIDICAL INTELLIGENTIA IN BRAZIL FOUNDED SAME PROBLEMS THAT MDB DID WITH JUDICIAL REFORM AMENDMENT. GUIMARAES CONCLUDED THAT TALK OF SELF-DISSOLUTION MUST BE STOPPED FROM PARTY VERNACULAR.

8. MAJOR DAILIES CONTINUE TO PUBLISH EXTENSIVE SPECULATIVE AND ANALYTICAL REPORTS, SOME OF THEM ATTRIBUTED TO WHEEL-PLACED SOURCES, ON THE LIKELY SHAPE AND INTENT OF THE POLITICAL MODIFICATIONS TO BE DECREED BY THE PRESIDENT DURING THE RECESS. MOST SUCH REPORTS FORESEE ADOPTION OF SOME COMBINATIONS OF ELECTORAL DEVICES, WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBJECT OF INTENSE SPECULATION SINCE THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS (BRASILIA 1040), WHICH WOULD ASSURE CONTINUED GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF GOVERNORSHIPS AND, AT LEAST, A MAJORITY IN THE FEDERAL SENATE, IF NOT IN BOTH HOUSES. (SEE SEPTTEL FOR EDITORIAL AND INTERPRETIVE PRESS REACTION TO GOVERNMENT'S MOVES).

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